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FM AMEMBASSY ANKARA

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3531

INFO RUCNRAQ/IRAQ COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEHAK/USDAO ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC//USDP:PDUSDP/ISA:EUR/ISA:NESA// PRIORITY

RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEUITH/ODC ANKARA TU PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC//J-3/J-5// PRIORITY

RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK PRIORITY

RHMFIASS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY

RHMFIASS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RHMFIASS/425ABS IZMIR TU//CC// PRIORITY

RHMFIASS/39ABG INCIRLIK AB TU PRIORITY

RUEPGAB/MNF-I C2X BAGHDAD IZ PRIORITY

PROG

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 002192

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/24/2017

TAGS: PREL PGOV PTER IZ TU

SUBJECT: KRG LOOKING FOR DIALOGUE WITH GOT

REF: A. ANKARA 1985

¶B. ANKARA 1959

Classified By: Political Counselor Janice Weiner for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: The Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) wants to establish a senior-level dialogue with the GOT, according to Safeen Dizayee, foreign policy advisor to KRG President Massoud Barzani. Iraqi Kurds are encouraged by a perceived slight increase in GOT flexibility to engage directly with the KRG, but the Turks' precondition continues to be that the KRG act against the PKK in northern Iraq. The KRG worries that military action against the PKK could potentially destabilize Iraq's entire Kurdish region. Dizayee conceded privately that holding a referendum on Kirkuk this year will be nearly impossible, but said KRG officials are pressing for a date certain before agreeing publicly to a postponement.

END SUMMARY

KRG-GOT DIALOGUE

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¶2. (C) Safeen Dizayee met with us during one of his regular visits to Ankara the week of August 20. On the GOT side, he met with PM/FM Foreign Policy Advisor Ahmet Davutoglu, GOT Iraq coordinator Amb. Oguz Celikkol, and Turkish National Intelligence Chief Emre Taner. Dizayee underscored the KRG's goal to establish senior-level dialogue with the GOT and spoke of reviving the February effort to schedule a meeting between KRG PM Nechirvan Barzani and FM Gul.

¶3. (C) Dizayee said he sensed increased willingness among GOT officials to engage directly with the KRG, though they continue to tell him they first need clear signals from the KRG that it is serious about countering the PKK threat. He understands Turkey's political situation in Turkey and AKP's need for political cover to move towards dialogue and assuage the Turkish military's concerns. At the same time, Dizayee noted that simply sitting down and putting all issues on the table could go far in helping establish common ground between the KRG and GOT.

¶4. (C) Per Dizayee, the KRG still does not believe that

military action against the PKK -- either by Turkey or by KRG peshmerga -- would put an end to the PKK threat. The military option has been tried previously and failed, he said, adding that attempting to take on PKK forces in difficult terrain risks "creating another Tora Bora." Dizayee claimed the PKK currently provides an effective buffer against Al-Qaeda Iraq (AQI) in northern Iraq; they have shown no interest in associating with AQI, but if attacked, could change tactics. The KRG does not want to open another front against terror in the Kurdish region right now.

#### FUTURE STATUS OF KIRKUK

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¶5. (C) Dizayee said KRG officials admit privately that holding a referendum on the status of Kirkuk will be impossible because of the failure of GOI officials to make adequate and timely preparations (normalization, a census, etc.). However, absent a future target date for the referendum, Iraqi Kurdish politicians will continue to find it very difficult to resist the people's expectations and agree to a postponement. Dizayee noted KRG discomfort with the recent "piling on" of international community actors, voicing support for the International Crisis Group's call for a UN-brokered agreement to create a "special status" for Kirkuk. Dizayee argued that denying the Kurdish people's constitutional right to a referendum would invalidate the entire constitutional process.

#### IRAQ'S POLITICAL FUTURE

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¶6. (C) While PM Maliki seems willing to make some changes that his coalition partners demand in order for his government to remain in power, it is not yet clear if Maliki will give in to demands by VP Hashimi or if Hashimi will be able to bring Tawafiq back into the coalition. If not, Dizayee suggested that Maliki and his coalition partners move on to other Sunni groups (nfi). Dizayee voiced special disdain for the role being played by former PM Allawi, saying his recent public criticism of Maliki was disingenuous and that he was working against the unity of Iraq.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Turkish officials continue to view the KRG as part of the PKK problem, not part of the solution. The formation of a new AKP-led government and the likely election of FM Abdullah Gul as president provide an opportunity to begin to transition to a new policy. The first step in that process will be for both sides to initiate a dialogue. Dizayee, when in Ankara, talks to the right people and carries a message of conciliation, but KRG leader Massoud Barzani's provocative, critical remarks about Turkey's Kurdish issue, Iraq, and PKK policies speak more loudly to the Turks than Dizayee. Still, if there is good-will and restraint on both sides, a window for possible dialogue may be about to open.

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